



Navy Command

**Commanding Officer
HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH
BFPO 365**

Email: HMSQNLZCO@D1010101.mnd.r.mil.uk

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This year is marching by at such a pace and I am conscious it has been some time since I last updated you on what the Fleet Flagship has been doing. Much has happened since the affiliates day in July of last year and it therefore gives me great pleasure to bring you up date with our activities.

The autumn of 2022 began with a somewhat unexpected visit to the USA. As you may be aware, our sister Ship HMS PRINCE OF WALES suffered a defect on one of her propeller shafts resulting in QUEEN ELIZABETH picking up elements of her tasking. It is testament to the flexibility and hard work of the Ship's Company, and to that of our industry partners, that we were able to turn our programme on its head and be ready to deploy across the Atlantic within a matter of days. With visits to Norfolk VA and New York, we demonstrated our seamless interoperability with US forces and were honoured to be the venue for the 2022 Atlantic Future Forum. Against the impressive backdrop of the Manhattan skyline, the Forum was led by the Department for International Trade, working alongside the Ministry of Defence and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to strengthen the trade and economic pillars of the Euro-Atlantic alliance and reinforce our security and defence partnerships with like-minded, democratic allies. The Ship's Company delivered this event in style and were well rewarded by the remarkable New York hospitality.

As we were departing UK waters to head to the US, we received the sad news of the passing of her late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, who was of course our Lady Sponsor. It was an historic and moving moment to be at sea in her ship as the sad news broke, one that visibly touched every single member of her Ship's Company. We now have on display the sea ensign that was flying on the day of her passing and a letter was written and placed into the Ship's time capsule to mark the end of the chapter of the Ship's life with her as our Sponsor. The late Queen took a keen interest in the ship, regularly asking for updates on our activity. Owing to that special relationship, I was privileged to represent the Ship at the State funeral; a moving and memorable experience which I will never forget.

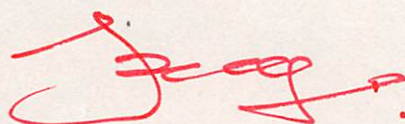
The Ship returned from the US in early October, and after a short maintenance period in Portsmouth, sailed for operations in northern waters. Embarking the Commander of the UK Carrier Strike Group and his staff, along with eight F35B jets from 617 Squadron RAF, plus Merlin and Wildcat helicopters from 820, 846 and 825 Naval Air Squadrons; the Ship again proved her ability to Command a Strike group. During a month of high intensity operations, escorted by destroyers, frigates and support shipping, QUEEN ELIZABETH continued to demonstrate our support to Scandinavian allies and partners in a united front to ongoing Russian aggression in Ukraine. A port visit to Oslo provided further opportunity to deepen relationships, whilst providing the Ship's Company with some welcome down time after a very busy autumn term.

The Ship returned to Portsmouth just before Christmas for some well-earned leave and, after a short maintenance period in January, we have most recently been operating around UK waters. We have achieved a number of firsts so far this year. In the last few weeks alone we have accomplished the first embarkation of the Chinook helicopters of 7 Squadron RAF onto the Ship. Additionally five F35 aircraft from 207 Squadron RAF have embarked for the first time. 207 Sqn

converts trained pilots onto the F35B airframe and it is a significant milestone for them to operate from the Ship.

We return to Portsmouth shortly for a planned maintenance period. This will include upgrades to systems and equipment along with preservation and routine work. We will return to sea in a few months for a period of training to ensure my people remain current and ready for both any contingent activation and the planned deployment later this year.

Of course everything that we have done since the summer simply could not have occurred without the hard work and dedication of the Ship's Company who work day and night to make all of this possible. They are truly inspiring. As an affiliate of the Ship, you play such an important role in supporting what they do. I am most grateful for your ongoing commitment to our relationship and I hope that we will continue to grow our bond of friendship throughout this year and beyond.

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read 'I D Feasey', with a stylized flourish at the end.

I D Feasey
Captain Royal Navy